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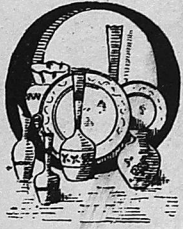
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# THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

## DRINKING MUGS.



NE of the most familiar objects to the traveller in Germany is the covered drinking mug, which is known by a variety of names. By the Teuton alone is its real value appreciated, and a male representative of the race over fifteen years of age without his own particular drinking mug would be as rare as a white blackbird. They are generally seen in a cheap ware, fitted with a pewter cover, and sold at a price within reach of all; but one must know the people and their habit to really appreciate the high value set upon these articles. In the middle and higher classes the mugs are elaborate and costly, and when made to order for any special purpose they are extremely so. It is a custom among all classes, but more particularly the students and soldiers, to exchange drinking mugs. One gives his own particular mug, decorated with his coat of arms, monogram, or favorite motto to his friend, and in return receives his. Generally the metal cover is fitted with a medallion of porcelain, on which is placed insignia or inscription, as the case may be, and the mottoes used are of great variety, and often scraps from some great *Dichter*, or, if a *Studenten* mug, probably the fruit of his own fertile brain. These gift mugs are a source of great pride, and always exhibited to the stranger, who is expected to open his eyes and mouth in wonder and admiration in case it is the gift of some Herr Graf or a personage of greater title. If the visitor chances to be a favorite the mug is placed at his disposal, and he must appreciate the high honor intended.

The first manufactures of steinzeug, or in English, stoneware, were on the Rhine, at Cologne, Rudesheim and other cities. The greatest attention was paid to the production of mugs, jugs (or pitchers), &c., receptacles for beverages so dear to the Teutonic heart, and the most curious examples of those early manufactures are carefully preserved. In all Germany there is not a collection that is near complete with the variety of rare articles that are possessed by single private collectors throughout the empire and in France and England. In the early part of this century the Rhine cities possessed a great many curious and valuable forms, but one by one they have been bought up by collectors and transported to other countries, leaving comparatively few of great worth to the nation or to private collections.

The first examples were produced in white, blue, brown and "gres de Flandre," and the ornaments and inscriptions were in relief. It was the law in the sixteenth century, and possibly for a longer period, that only the sons of the master workmen should be taught the art of manufacturing these wares; hence the same family name has been attached to the same wares for many generations.

Potters were often ordered to produce a certain number of drinking mugs to be decorated after certain designs, &c., to be presented at public expense to the various magistrates and city officials. Gift mugs which in those times were considered expensive, really cost only a few pennies, but the ordinary mug cost less than the value of one of our pennies to produce. Since then, and that, too, many years ago, they have brought a thousand fold their original value. Such mugs were highly prized and were handed from father to son through numberless generations, coming at last into the hands of the collector or the museums of the government.

Royalty, the nobility, the priesthood, and the rich families had their mugs and jugs made to order (as, indeed, do many at the present day), and such articles had the coat of arms of the family with various inscriptions, &c. Those presented to the city or land officials bore the coat of arms of the city or state. The rich possessed a number of mugs richly embellished with silver, which served to ornament the sideboard and were brought to the table only when special compliment was to be paid a favorite guest.

The earliest drinking mugs were of simple form, with a round body and flaring neck and base. They were of unglazed clay, sometimes with, but oftener without, handles and unadorned. Later a salt glaze was used and more elaborate shapes studied; handles and spouts grew to assume an ornamental form and some decoration was attempted. The reader may be interested to learn what sort of decoration was used. We must remember that these first jugs, while primitive in form, were not produced in primitive times. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the old masters were at work, and their fame spread far and wide. No doubt the ideas of decoration sprung from this source, for the subjects were identical with many developed under the brush of Italy's great painters. At first the results were crude and needed an explanation of the intentions of the artist to be understood, but, as with all things, "practice makes perfect."

In the Gewerbe Museum at Berlin, there is an old jug with a representation of Christ and the devil on one side, accompanied by the words—"Pack dich Teufel in Instrum," while on the other, Christ, with an axe, is about to destroy sin in the form

of a tree, with which are the words—"Das Unkrut will ich aus roten und werfen ins Feuer."

A mug owned by the Duke of Anhalt shows in relief a representation of Susanna and Judith in the bath, Isaac's sacrifice, David, Lot and his daughters, Joshua, Joseph and the wife of Potiphar.

A mug in the Disch collection at Cologne represents the twelve months of the year in medallions together with a number of Bible stories illustrated, and the inscription—"Sich fur dich, Freud ist misslich." Religious subjects were in the majority in these early times and they were almost invariably amusing in the handling of these early potters. Often they were unchaste, and to-day would be considered positively indecent; however, they were suited to a time and people who, no doubt, saw in them only good teachings.

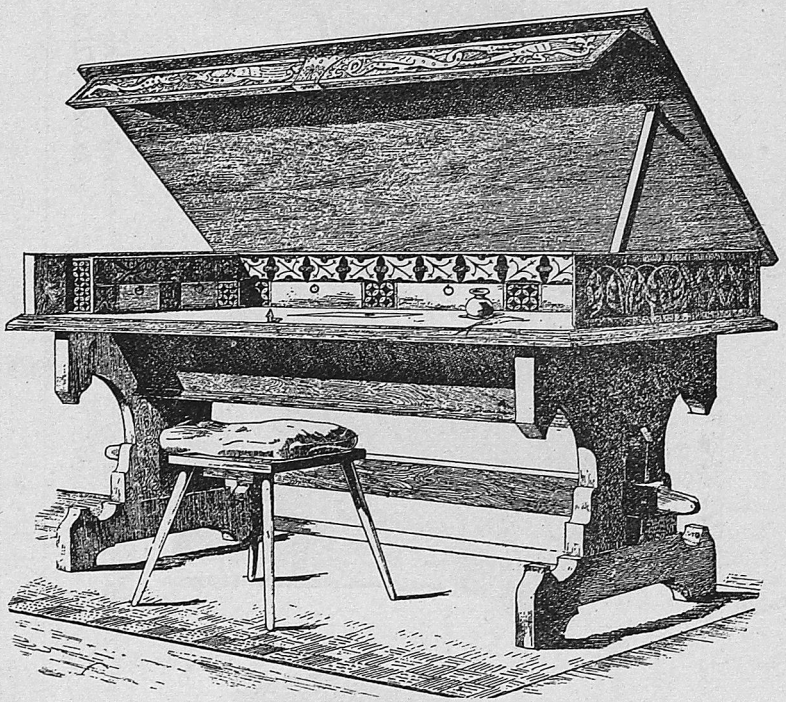
Attempts were made to introduce entire histories of prominent Bible characters, and one mug, for example, bears a representation of the life of Joseph, another shows Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the death of Abel, Noah and the Ark, Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham and Isaac, and other subjects.

At the termination of the seventeenth century majolica was introduced and superseded in a measure the stoneware as a material for the manufacture of drinking utensils. The art was borrowed from the Italians and the French—mainly the former—and the mugs, jugs and receptacles for the favorite beverage brought Nurnberg into prominence as a pottery centre. The mugs of Nurnberg have ever been famous. A jug in the Nurnberg collection is described as being decorated with figures of Adam and Eve, and Mary and Jesus "in the costumes of the times."

An odd idea is that which brings drinking mugs into use as memorials of the death of some important personage or dear friend. A celebrated mug of this kind represents the battle in which the hero was killed, and bears also an inscription such as one would expect to see on a tombstone. This certainly is a novel way of keeping the memorial green.

## AN ANTIQUE SWISS WRITING TABLE.

THIS antique Swiss *Secrétaire Gothique* of the fifteenth century was originally used in the Augustinian cloisters of Basle, and is now in the museum at that place. It is designed on the trestle principle, the solid upright standard



ends being braced by the under rail and fastened by wedges. It is decorated in white, blue and red. The cover is hinged so as to close when the desk is not in use.

DECORATOR AND FURNISHER covers a department of effort all its own. We can hardly agree with the statement, however, that "woman is the sphinx of art." "Points about pottery" is instructive. "Progressive lessons for beginners in china painting" is just what many have waited for and its teachings will be readily appropriated. "Decorative designing," "Japanese fan art," "Marbling" and "Transparent painting on glass," especially of the latter, with its minute instructions, are timely. The designs in foliage and those for the library, the household and drawing-room are beautiful and wrought with care. "Decorative composition," translated from the French of Henri Mayeux is continued in several pages and is a review through interesting history of civilization in all countries.—*Albany Evening Journal*.